

# **Persons With Disabilities Training Review Team Report**

## **November 26, 2008**

### **Team Members:**

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### **The charge to the team was reviewed:**

Within the Governor's Executive Order #4 there is a specific emphasis on the inclusion of persons with disabilities: *"Each agency will work with IVRS and Iowa Department for the Blind to increase the number of persons with disabilities employed in the state workforce."*

The Disability Subcommittee is specifically interested in identifying strategies that will provide guidance and support to state agencies in carrying out this order.

Therefore, the training team's goal was to:

- 1) review the state's existing educational offerings for supervisors and managers regarding the recruitment, hiring and retention of state employees with disabilities;
- 2) identify training gaps, and;
- 3) develop recommendations on changes and/or enhancements that will support the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the state workforce.

### **Review and Discussion:**

Initially the team spent time discussing reasons that may contribute to an underutilization of persons with disabilities in state workforce:

- Fears of managers
- Lack of understanding
- Pool of qualified applicants (many applicants with disabilities are reluctant to self-identify)
- Resources/supports for managers – where/how to find them
- Discomfort in addressing the subject or asking questions
- Lack of successful examples

The next two steps for the team was (1) to identify resources and trainings currently available to hiring supervisors that support the goal of executive order #4 and then (2) to identify obvious gaps.

## Current Trainings and Resources:

- **PDS course offerings** that address disability issues include:
  1. Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA): the course includes an overview of the law, in addition to information on the definition of disability, essential functions, reasonable accommodations, and recruitment and hiring issues under Title 1.
  2. Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA): Making the Most of Your Workforce
  3. From Interview to Hire: The Successful Search for Talent
  4. Valuing Diversity in the Workplace
  5. Diversity Training for Managers and Supervisors
  6. Managing Generational Differences at Work
  7. Building Inclusive Work Environments
  8. Beyond Diversity
  9. Human Relations Skills
- **PDS Courses under development:**
  - Diversity Training for Employees
  - Course on Recruiting Techniques (SME is Robin Jenkins)
- **Affirmative Action Reports** identifies departments that are underutilizing persons with disabilities
- **Strategies to identify a pool of qualified applicants with disabilities:**
  - Self-disclosure on state application (optional)
  - Process for IVRS and DOB to certify qualified applicants with disabilities
- **Online resources on DAS website:**
  - Managers and Supervisors Manual [http://das.hre.iowa.gov/ms\\_manual.html](http://das.hre.iowa.gov/ms_manual.html)
  - Information for Managers and Supervisors <http://das.hre.iowa.gov/info-managers.html>
  - Applicant Screening Manual [http://das.iowa.gov/alphabetical\\_index/](http://das.iowa.gov/alphabetical_index/)
- **Free Consultation from EDRN (Employer's Disability Resource Network):**
  - IVRS
  - Dept for the Blind
  - Deaf Services
  - Department of Human Rights, Division of Persons with Disabilities
  - Veterans Administration
  - Social Security Administration
  - Workforce Development
  - ADA Great Plains Center
- Opportunities to hire temps, interns and to provide customized training
- Disability-Friendly Self Assessment Tool

<b>GAPS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accurate data on PWD in the state workforce</li><li>• Mandatory training for supervisors on disability in the workplace</li><li>• Communication of available training and/or resources</li><li>• Cost of Training (sometimes this prohibits small departments from participating)</li><li>• Incentives to hire/train</li><li>• \$ for accommodations – a pool of \$ that could be tapped into by all departments.</li></ul>



### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

The course offerings from PDS that are currently in place provide both legal and practical information for managers and supervisors to raise awareness of hiring responsibilities as it relates to all workplace diversity. Information specific to the population of persons with disabilities is infused into the course offerings noted above however, there is not a training offered specifically to address strategies that will impact the executive order #4 directive to “...*increase the number of persons with disabilities employed in the state workforce.*”

If the inclusion of persons with disabilities is a state workforce priority, and if hiring managers and supervisors will be held accountable for outcomes, there is a need for specific resources and training that will support their efforts. While the team concurs that training alone will not transform a workplace culture, there was agreement that adding the training course described below with specific components that can be enhanced and supported by additional resources is a good place to start building change.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Add one course to the PDS offerings that will provide pragmatic, practical knowledge and resources to hiring managers and supervisors. The following proposed course outline and working title includes elements that are currently missing in current PDS course offerings:

***“The Untapped Resource-Hiring and Retaining Employees with Disabilities”***

- Recruitment
- Screening
- Attitudinal Issues – Etiquette, Assumptions and Stereotypes
- Hiring – Interviewing
- Reasonable Accommodations for hiring and retention
- Performance Management and Problem Solving
- Resources

2. Set expectations for all new managers and supervisors to attend the training above as a condition of their employment (to be included in the supervisor's performance plan).
3. Develop distance learning and webinar opportunities for all managers and supervisors on an ongoing basis that will refresh their skills and knowledge about the disability-friendly workplace for employees and applicants with disabilities.
4. Address ways to communicate information about online resources and statewide resources such as EDRN that will provide support and consultation for managers and supervisors in the recruitment and retention of this underutilized workforce population.
5. The Disability Subcommittee should review and refine the supportive resource materials currently online to support managers and supervisors in this initiative.
6. In conclusion, the team recognized that there is a need to be cognizant of barriers to participation as the above opportunities are developed. We recommend that solutions to these issues be a part of the planning process:
  - Cost of participation (fees and travel expenses)
  - Accessibility (packaged to be effective and usable for managers)
  - Costs for accommodations and assistive technology